

# LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

Sir,—“G.H.D.” would be more helpful if he would not solve vast spiritual and economic problems in abstract terms. Nor will many people accept what he says merely because it is uttered with majestic authority. On principle I object to the wording of the thesis “Secularism leads logically to Communism.” Not even “G.H.D.” knows this for certain; it is merely opinion, and if “G.H.D.” cared to argue that “Secularism tends to lead to Communism,” he would be much more logical, wouldn't he? All we are entitled to say, with our limited knowledge, is not “All secular people are/have been Communists,” but “Some secular people are/have been Communists.” But perhaps “G.H.D.” will not argue about people and things instead of about abstractions.

I do not automatically agree that “if you deny that God is the goal of human life, the next step is to subordinate the individual completely to the community.” “G.H.D.” goes too fast. He must define. For instance, there have been many Gods, and we are entitled to ask whether belief in the God of Bishop Barnes, or of General Franco, or of Hiawatha, or of Brigham Young would be adequate to save us from getting completely submerged in the community. What too does “G.H.D.” mean exactly by “the next step?” What is “complete subordination?” Suppose I am prepared to admit that God is the goal of human life, would that on its own satisfy “G.H.D.”?

In his second paragraph, “G.H.D.” implies, if I interpret him correctly, that what values we have are the remains of the spiritual wealth accumulated by our ancestors. Am I to suppose that we are incapable of creating spiritual values? Or can some people still do it? If so, what are the qualifications necessary for being a creator of values?

Of course I have plenty more questions to ask “G.H.D.” but if he could put me on the right lines with the above I should be grateful. One must begin somewhere. —C. (Sumner).

Sir,—May I take this opportunity afforded by your columns to advise your correspondent “G.H.D.” to brush up his logic. His criticisms of Sir Thomas Hunter in *The Listener* of July 15, despite a verbal appearance of profundity, fail to convince because they rest upon the wild assertion that “Secularism leads logically to Communism,” which is explained by a piece of reasoning which would find a place in a casebook of political irrationalism. “Secularism,” we are told, “leads logically to Communism, for if you deny God is the goal of human life, the next step is to subordinate the individual completely to the community.”

This deduction is a step requiring seven-league intellectual boots. It has nothing to do with either logic or experience. Perhaps “G.H.D.” denies that Christians, from Calvin to Franco, have not always been backward in repressing individualism to attain to God, or believes that the great secular thinkers since the Renaissance have all been groping towards Marx?

There are, I would suggest, an unhappy grey shade of men between “G.H.D.’s” white and black, who do not believe that God is the “goal” of

society, and who survive in the middle of his “next step,” unaware that Communism is the only means to their ends. It is his duty to prove to these the error of their “makeshift” and “transitory” ways.

KEITH SINCLAIR (Auckland).

## LILBURN'S SONATA

Sir,—L. D. Austin's letter was in thoroughly bad taste. It is a pity the writer cannot forget past conflicts and give the composer his dues. Nearly all of us at some time have envied those who could do so much better than ourselves with so little effort, but it is a poor man who, loses his temper and sense of values in the same breath. Recently, when a visiting artist played a trifle by Mr. Austin, perhaps Mr. Lilburn was unimpressed? I was, but kept my opinion to myself!

A. WILLS (New Plymouth).

Sir,—Is it your editorial policy to print such letters as L. D. Austin's recent letter on Lilburn's sonata? The critical comments are, of course, foolish and worthless, constituting merely an attack on a fine and sensitive musician, and an implied slur on another. Should writers of letters such as the one referred to be allowed to display their lack of taste in the columns of a high-class weekly? As you so aptly remark in your editorial of the same issue, criticism . . . “should be able to point the way to higher standards.”

E. D. MCKENZIE  
(Wellington).

## CHILDHOOD GAMES

Sir,—The satisfied reader is proverbially silent, whilst the carping critic takes every chance of exercising his easily acquired and subtly self-flattering talents. Editors, then, blamed continually whatever they say, by someone or other, may be pardoned for non-committal and too nicely balanced statement. They console themselves by believing in the immense inaudible presence of the contented reader. As a member of that body I would like to help to justify their faith in us, and violating our oath of anonymity, say with a little more humility and a little less verbosity how much I liked the recent editorial on childhood games. It contains felicitous generalisations expressing those things we have often thought ourselves, but never so well expressed, in a sensitive and unified whole.

K. I. MASLEN (Christchurch).

## BERTRAND RUSSELL

Sir,—Bertrand Russell is not likely to need my help as a result of G.H.D.'s philosophical criticism. I joined issue with G.H.D. mainly because he expressed his opinions as objective facts. I still think that, when Russell doubts that “to exist is better than not to exist,” he is doubting the ethical nature of existence; and I am well aware, in spite of G.H.D.'s apparent notion to the contrary, that Russell discusses metaphysics. “The truth is,” writes G.H.D., “that Russell has never grasped the meaning of the word ‘is.’ Well, who has grasped its meaning, or, for that matter, the meaning of the word ‘I,’ or of the word ‘of’? My own

puny brain can understand them only through the agency of what Whitehead calls the concept of God.

I am not surprised that G.H.D. should smile, together with those of his philosophical tradition; but I am surprised that he should admit it. For that smile also has a tradition. Apart from his smile, G.H.D. has these other arguments to offer: “Few will agree . . . This truth is self-evident . . . Those of us who belong . . . 99.9 per cent of humanity . . . consensus of opinion . . .” And they may all be sufficiently answered, I think, by Uncle Toby's *Argumentum Fistulatorium*.

Finally, sir, I shall oblige G.H.D. by explaining why I think that Russell is right, in describing treachery to truth as morally reprehensible. I shall explain without any reference to Theistic grounds. And I want to inform G.H.D. that he does presume, and that he presumes beyond all reason, when he considers that by ethical standards I mean Theistic grounds. Morals depend on the people they belong to. Among one Indian sect, free love is not morally reprehensible; with us, it is. Among Thugs it is not immoral to steal or to murder. Among Englishmen, after studying their customs and laws, I think that Russell has reason to believe that treachery to truth is morally reprehensible, in all its forms of perjury, deceit, lying, evasion, misrepresentation, insufficiency, and presumption.

ROBERT MOUAT (Christchurch).

## LAKE KARAPIRO

Sir,—I wish to draw your attention to an error in your issue for July 8. On page 7, under the heading “Broadcasting the Empire Games,” you refer to Lake Karapiro as near Hamilton. This is not so. Lake Karapiro is near Cambridge, only four miles away. Hamilton is another fourteen miles distant.

For your information the following are the distances to Lake Karapiro from the nearest towns: Cambridge, 4 miles; Te Awamutu, 18 miles; Morrinsville, 25 miles; Matamata, 24 miles; Putaruru, 21 miles; Hamilton City, 18 miles.

K. L. WILKINSON  
(Mayor of Cambridge).

## MOZART FOR TO-DAY

Sir,—In your issue of July 18 “A.B.” writing on “Mozart for To-day,” mentions the performance by the pianists Jocelyn Walker and Leslie Souness of the Mozart two-piano Sonata (not concerto, as stated) as being new to most listeners. To my knowledge, during the two and a-half years that I have been in New Zealand, this has been broadcast as a studio recital by four combinations of pianists other than those “A.B.” speaks of, and it has also been given a public performance in Wellington quite recently.

IDA CARLESS (Wellington).

## TODD DUNCAN

Sir,—This is to thank the NZBS for giving us the opportunity of hearing Todd Duncan's beautiful singing. We live more or less in the backblocks and the radio is our only means of entertainment. For many moons we have been most anxious to hear Todd Duncan. He was all we had imagined him to be, and more. Not only was he a

superb artist, blessed with a grand voice; but he was utterly sincere. His rendering of the lovely old Spirituals left us tingling in response to the warm emotion in the man's voice. A person of Todd Duncan's calibre is a power for good as he moves about the world. Good luck to him!

E. PERRY (Halepe-Taupo).

## RADIO DISCUSSION

Sir,—When I consult *The Listener* for my programme, in these long, and in Taupo, lonely evenings, I first look out if there is a discussion. Having no living person here in Taupo to be able to discuss with, I wished at least I could listen to one at the radio each evening. So I was very much looking forward to the Russian anthology this evening. But alas! Mrs. Lake is prepared too well and gave her great knowledge in such a velocity that I, although I have certainly read more of Russian literature than the average person, could not follow. She should at least spell the name of the author. I could not even write for the book, not knowing it precisely. I think the discussions which are fully improvised are the best. Please tell Mrs. Lake to speak slower at the radio. And please put discussion over the radio as much as possible.

In case you need questions for discussions here are two, which occupy me long since, but perhaps they are too philosophical for most people: (1) The religious man and the agnostic have generally the same moral basis for their actions. The religious man acts according to the revealed laws of a divine eternal authority. Wherefrom does the agnostic get his certainty of moral standards? (2) Can a man, living on a lonely island, commit a sin? E. DELBRUCK

(for the time being in Taupo).

## EARLY NEW ZEALAND

Sir,—On behalf of many listeners this side of Cook Strait, I would like to record an appreciation of the recent series of talks on early life in our land by Douglas Cresswell. With “John Guard,” “Te Rauparaha and Cook Strait,” and “The Redcoats Come to New Zealand,” Mr. Cresswell gave us wonderful descriptions of those stirring times (a somewhat hackneyed phrase, but they certainly were stirring!). We in New Zealand are indeed fortunate to have such a combination of historian and broadcasting personality as Mr. Cresswell. It was rather unfortunate, then, that for his closing episode in the series from station 3ZB, the wrong episode was accidentally played. It detracted from what would have been a great finale for such an excellent series. I hope that in the near future we shall have the opportunity of hearing more of these “living” historical narratives from Mr. Cresswell. DOWSY (Christchurch).

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

D.Y.: Correspondents should give their names.

E.B.H. (Te Ararua): Passing on your complaint.

Graham White (Wellington): You did not give your address.

A.S.K. (Papakura): The information became available too late for inclusion in *The Listener*, but it was published in the daily newspapers.

H. Scott (Matapihi): The boxing contest was not broadcast on the date mentioned because no professional bout had been arranged. Frequent announcements were made during the day that the boxing would not be relayed from the Town Hall.